

Flora and Fauna

The thousand acre sanctuary of Audubon Canyon Ranch encompasses four rugged canyons arising from Bolinas Lagoon. The steep slopes are clothed with dense forests of Douglas-fir, Coast Redwood and California Bay. The more open hillsides support a varied vegetation of grasslands, coastal scrub, mixed evergreen forest and chaparral. The canyon floors have both riparian and freshwater marsh habitats.

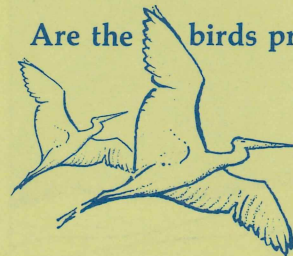


Although the rookery of egrets and herons is the main attraction of this former dairy ranch, over 90 species of land birds may also be observed along with many mammals such as blacktail deer, bobcat, badger, gray fox, raccoon, and brush rabbit. Amphibians are frequently seen in winter and early spring, while harmless reptiles frequent sunny areas.



The ranch frontage along Bolinas Lagoon provides viewing of more than 60 species of wetland birds and some of the resident harbor seals.

Are the birds protected?



Yes and No. The use in women's hats of aigrettes, the nuptial plumes attached to the backs of Great Egrets, nearly brought about the extinction of this species

around the turn of the century. The nation's first Audubon Society was formed to protest their slaughter, and strong laws were passed to protect them. Today, however, man threatens these birds and other wildlife with destruction of valuable wetland habitats and environmental pollutants. The presence of pesticides and other synthetic chemicals in the food web which supports them, offer continuing threats to their survival.

Educational Programs

Audubon Canyon Ranch offers many educational services to the public. Free docent conducted tours for schools and other groups may be reserved by contacting the office during office hours. The Volunteer Council gladly accepts applications for new docent-training classes.

Nature tours of the Ranch led by trained docents are offered free of charge on weekends. Please check with the registration table for time and place. The Bert Harwell Nature Trail is a ¾ mile stroll through Garden Club Canyon; self-guiding pamphlets are available at the registration table.

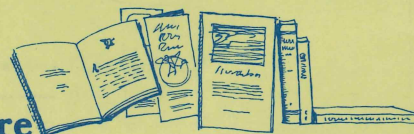


Volunteer Canyon

Residential natural history programs for adults and families are held each autumn, winter and spring. Classes meet at the Hubbard Education Center in Volunteer Canyon. Here participants may lodge in the rustic dormitory with its alternative energy systems. Whittell Hall provides ample classroom and meeting space, a library, a laboratory and commercial style kitchen. Please inquire at the office for a list of courses and fees, or call Volunteer Canyon 415-868-0611.

Display Hall

A visit to the Display Hall, located in the converted milking barn, provides visitors with a good introduction to Audubon Canyon Ranch. Displays to be seen include sections on: The Heronry, The Lagoon, The Plant Communities and the Animal Life on the Ranch. The History of the Land and People section displays the unique Geology of the San Andreas Fault Zone, the Early Native American Culture and Local 19th Century History.



Bookstore

Across from the Display Hall is the Bookstore where field guides, binoculars, natural history books and aids, postcards, etc. are for sale.

Visitors Welcome



No charge is made for visits to Audubon Canyon Ranch. Contributions are welcome, however. They are needed for the maintenance and development of the Ranch and Nature Center and are tax deductible.

PLEASE:

Register upon arrival.
No smoking except at headquarters.
Picnicking only in picnic area.
Pets are not allowed.
Beware of poison oak.
Make as little noise as possible.
Please stay on trails.
Collect only litter, take only photos.



The Ranch is open March 1 through July 4. The public is welcome on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Schools and other groups by appointment Tuesdays through Fridays. The Ranch is closed all Mondays. For appointments, please contact Audubon Canyon Ranch on weekdays, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Audubon Canyon Ranch is on Shoreline Highway approximately three miles north of Stinson Beach in Marin County.

Future plans include educational development of ACR properties on Tomales Bay and in the Sonoma Valley.



Audubon Canyon Ranch

4900 Shoreline Highway
Stinson Beach, California 94970
Phone 415-383-1644

Audubon Canyon Ranch



A wildlife sanctuary and center for nature education on Bolinas Lagoon Marin County, California U.S.A.

A joint project of the Marin, Golden Gate, Sequoia and Madrone Audubon Societies.

The Heronry

Audubon Canyon Ranch contains a major heronry of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. Each spring these birds nest in the tops of the tall redwood trees in Schwarz Grove, an exceptionally fine and protected nesting site. They find food—fish and crustaceans—for themselves and their young in the shallow water and tidelands of nearby Bolinas Lagoon. Both the protected nesting site and ample feeding grounds are necessary for their survival.

Henderson Overlook provides a rare view into the nests of approximately 120 pair of Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets. From this vantage a naturalist will interpret the dynamics of the breeding colony and assist with the telescopes provided.



What kinds of birds nest in the heronry?

Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*—about 50 pair). Great Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*—about 85 pair), and an occasional pair of Snowy Egrets (*Leucophoyx thula*).

How large are the birds?

The Great Blue, largest heron in North America, stands 4 to 5 feet tall and has a wingspread of nearly 6 feet. Egrets are smaller, with a wingspread of roughly 4½ feet.

When do they arrive and begin nesting?

Heron begin to arrive the last week of January and start courtship and nesting in February. The egrets arrive in mid-March and begin nesting later in March.

Can males be distinguished from females?

No. Males and females of both species bear the same plumage, including nuptial plumes. Both sexes incubate eggs and feed the young.

How many eggs do the birds lay?

How many young are fledged?

From 2 to 5 eggs are laid in each nest. Both species incubate their eggs for about 28 days. Young egrets can fly after about 7 weeks, herons after 9 weeks, though they continue to receive food from the parents for a while after that. Successful nests average 1 to 3 young birds which reach flying age.

What do the birds eat?

Heron and egrets are waders and fishers. They hunt along the deeper lagoon channels in search of fish and crabs. In addition, the herons hunt in marshes and fields for frogs, snakes, lizards and rodents.

Where do the birds go in winter?

Although the destination of our particular birds is not known, herons and egrets are found during winter months in the warmer parts of North America, Mexico, and as far south as Central and South America. A few herons stay at Bolinas Lagoon all winter.

Trails at Audubon Canyon Ranch

Several miles of trails are available to visitors, March 1st through July 4th:

- Rawlings Trail—¼ mile, 250ft. rise to overlook.
 - Kent Trail—¼ mile, 250ft. drop from overlook.
 - Griffin Loop Trail—3 miles, 800 ft. rise, steep.
 - Harwell Nature Trail—¾ mile, self-guided trail. Pamphlet available at registration table.
 - Bourne Trail—1½ miles, 1400 ft. elevation. Connects on Bolinas Ridge with Pacific Coast Trail and GGNRA lands.
 - Lewis Trail—1 mile, steep, not a through trail.
- The trails may be steep, narrow and slippery. Please wear sturdy hiking shoes or boots.

